

## Message Text

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61

ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /031 W

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R 131600Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4490

S E C R E T TUNIS 860

EXDIS

.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, TS

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA'S HEALTH

1. DURING MY MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA FEBRUARY 13 I ASKED HIM CANDIDLY AND IN CONFIDENCE HOW HE SIZED UP PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA'S CURRENT HEALTH. I RECALLED THAT DURING MY LAST MEETING WITH BOURGUIBA ON JANURARY 14, I HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT THE PRESIDENT'S MIND WAS SLIPPING.

2. NOUIRA REPLIED THAT THE PRESIDENT'S PHYSICAL RPT PHYSICAL CONDITION IS ROBUST. HE CONTINUES TO BE VIGOROUS AND IS EATING WELL. IN FACT, HE IS PUTTING ON A LITTLE TOO MUCH WEIGHT AND HAS BEGUN TO WATCH HIS WAISTLINE.

3. WITH REGARD TO THE PRESIDENT'S MENTAL HEALTH, NOUIRA EXPRESSED VIEW THAT IT HAS IMPROVED SINCE BOURGUIBA LEFT TUNISIA ALMOST FOUR WEEKS AGO FOR A REST. HE NOTED, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THE PRESIDENT HAS BETTER CONCENTRATION THAN BEFORE HE LEFT. IN HIS MOST RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH PRESIDENT, LATTER HAD SHOWN FULL COMPREHENSION. NOUIRA SAID THAT AS LONG AS THE PRESIDENT RECEIVES GOOD ADVICE, HE THOUGHT HE COULD BE COUNTED UPON TO MAKE THE RIGHT DECISIONS.

4. NOUIRA ADDED THAT IT WAS ON THE ADVICE OF THE DOCTORS  
SECRET

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THAT BOURGUIBA DECIDED NOT TO ATTEND THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE AT LAHORE. HE EXPECTED THE PRESIDENT TO RETURN TO TUNISIA AS SCHEDULED TOWARDS THE END OF THIS MONTH.

5. COMMENT: WHILE PRIME MINISTER WAS EXTREMELY FORTH-COMING WITH REGARD TO REST OF OUR CONVERSATION (IN WHICH HE REVIEWED EVENTS SINCE UNION DELARATION OF JANUARY 12TH), HE HEDGED ON QUESTION ON PRESIDENT'S HEALTH. HE GAVE NO HINT OF AWARENESS OF APPARENT SERIOUSNESS OF PRESIDENT'S BASIC PHYSICAL CONDITION. HE SEEMS CONFIDENT THAT PRESIDENT WILL RETURN TO TUNISIA ON SCHEDULE -- REFUTING RUMORS THAT PRESIDENT'S HEALTH HAS WORSENERED TO EXTENT HE MIGHT HAVE TO REMAIN IN SWITZERLAND INDEFINITELY.  
SEELYE

SECRET

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